



# Cherokee Nation History Course

## • FOREWORD •

The romance, mystery and endurance of the Cherokee Nation is found in the quote of Redbird Smith:

"I have always believed that the Great Creator had a great design for my people, the Cherokees. I have been taught that from my childhood up and now in my mature manhood I recognize it as a great truth. Our forces have been dissipated by the external forces, perhaps it has been just a training, but we must now get together as race and render our contribution to mankind.

We are endowed with intelligence, we are industrious, we are loyal and we are spiritual but we are overlooking the particular Cherokee mission on earth, for no man nor race is endowed with these qualifications without a designed purpose."

The Cherokees in the 1700's, learned agriculture and began to prosper. Over the next 50 years, the U.S. government executed a plan of land acquisition by treaty.

By 1839, the Cherokees were forced to remove to Indian Territory. In this next 50-year period, the Cherokee people and their government, the Cherokee Nation, prospered to become one of the most sophisticated societies and governments in the United States.

By the 1890's, western expansion subjected the Cherokee Nation to perhaps the cruelest fate of all for this proud and successful government. Senator Dawes at the Lake Mohonk Conference in 1883, stated:

"The head chief told us that there was not a family in that whole nation that had not a home of its own. There was not a pauper in that nation, and the nation did not owe a dollar. It built its own capitol, in which we had this examination, and built its schools and its hospitals. Yet the defect of the system was apparent. They have got as far as they can go, because they own their land in common. It is Henry George's system, and under that there is no enterprise to make your home any better than that of your neighbors. There is no selfishness, which is at the bottom of civilization. Till this people will consent to give up their lands, and divide them among their citizens so that each can own the land he cultivates, they will not make much more progress."

One hundred years ago, the U.S. Congress debated allotment of the Cherokee lands and dissolution of the Cherokee Nation under the Curtis Act. Senator Bates of Tennessee was the singular voice in opposition. On the U.S. Senate floor, he stated:

"Mr. President, I think this bill is wrong. I think it is in violation of all the treaties that have ever been made with these Indians by this government. It overrides moral and legal obligations. The whole thing is wrong. I have the treaties here by me which I could read if necessary, but they have already been read and the case is well understood to be as I state it. I protest against the passage of this bill."

In 1906, the 14 million acres of Cherokee land was allotted to individuals. The balance was declared surplus and sold. This was an effort to destroy the Cherokee Nation and assimilate its people. The U. S. government tried to extinguish the Cherokee Nation and its government. In April 1906, the U. S. government took away from the